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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

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In re Application of :
Silviu Borac :
Application No. 10/062,192 :
Filed: February 1, 2002 :
Attorney Docket No. MENT-062 :

ON PETITION

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a), filed August 5, 2005, to revive the above-identified application.

The petition is **DISMISSED**.

Any request for reconsideration or petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extension of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition Under 37 CFR 1.137(a)." This is **not** a final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C § 704.

The above-identified application became abandoned for failure to reply to the non-final Office action mailed April 19, 2004, which set a shortened statutory period for reply of three (3) months from its mailing date. No response was received within the allowable period, and the application became abandoned on July 20, 2004. A Notice of Abandonment was mailed on November 30, 2004.

A grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a)¹ must be accompanied by: (1) the required reply,² unless previously filed; (2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(1); (3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due

¹As amended effective December 1, 1997. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice 62 Fed. Reg. 53131, 53194-95 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 63, 119-20 (October 21, 1997).

²In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof.

date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to this paragraph was unavoidable; and (4) any terminal disclaimer required by 37 CFR 1.137(c).

The instant petition lacks item (1).

The Commissioner is responsible for determining the standard for unavoidable delay and for applying that standard.

“In the specialized field of patent law, . . . the Commissioner of Patent and Trademarks is primarily responsible for the application and enforcement of the various narrow and technical statutory and regulatory provisions. The Commissioner’s interpretation of those provisions is entitled to considerable deference.”³

“[T]he Commissioner’s discretion cannot remain wholly uncontrolled, if the facts **clearly** demonstrate that the applicant’s delay in prosecuting the application was unavoidable, and that the Commissioner’s adverse determination lacked **any** basis in reason or common sense.”⁴

“The court’s review of a Commissioner’s decision is ‘limited, however, to a determination of whether the agency finding was arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with the law.’”⁵

“The scope of review under the arbitrary and capricious standard is narrow and a court is not to substitute its judgment for that of the agency.”⁶

The standard

“[T]he question of whether an applicant’s delay in prosecuting an application was unavoidable must be decided on a case-by-case basis, taking all of the facts and circumstances into account.”⁷

³Rydeen v. Quigg, 748 F.Supp. 900, 904, 16 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1876 (D.D.C. 1990), aff’d without opinion (Rule 36), 937 F.2d 623 (Fed. Cir.1991) (citing Morganroth v. Quigg, 885 F.2d 843, 848, 12 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1125 (Fed. Cir. 1989); Ethicon, Inc. v. Quigg 849 F.2d 1422, 7 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1152 (Fed. Cir. 1988) (“an agency’ interpretation of a statute it administers is entitled to deference”); see also Chevron U.S.A. Inc. v. Natural Resources Defence Council, Inc., 467 U.S. 837, 844, 81 L. Ed. 694, 104 S. Ct. 2778 (1984) (“if the statute is silent or ambiguous with respect to the specific issue, the question for the court is whether the agency’s answer is based on a permissible construction of the statute.”)

⁴Commissariat A L’Energie Atomique et al. v. Watson, 274 F.2d 594, 597, 124 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 126 (D.C. Cir. 1960) (emphasis added).

⁵Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 316, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1130 (N.D. Ind. 1987) (citing Camp v. Pitts, 411 U.S. 138, 93 S. Ct.1241, 1244 (1973) (citing 5 U.S.C. §706 (2)(A)); Beerly v. Dept. of Treasury, 768 F.2d 942, 945 (7th Cir. 1985); Smith v. Mossinghoff, 217 U.S. App. D.C. 27, 671 F.2d 533, 538 (D.C. Cir.1982)).

⁶Ray v. Lehman, 55 F.3d 606, 608, 34 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1786 (Fed. Cir. 1995) (citing Motor Vehicles Mfrs. Ass’n v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co., 463 U.S. 29, 43, 77 L.Ed.2d 443, 103 S. Ct. 2856 (1983)).

⁷Id.

The general question asked by the Office is: "Did petitioner act as a reasonable and prudent person in relation to his most important business?"⁸ Nonawareness of a PTO rule will not constitute unavoidable delay.⁹

Application of the standard to the current facts and circumstances

In the instant petition, petitioner maintains that the circumstances leading to the abandonment of the application meet the aforementioned unavoidable standard and, therefore, petitioner qualifies for relief under 37 CFR 1.137(a). In support thereof, petitioner asserts a response to the non-final Office action was timely transmitted via facsimile to the Office.


With regard to item (1) above, a proper reply to the non-final Office action did not accompany the petition. A proper reply might include an amendment or continuing application and must accompany any renewed petition filed.

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

By mail: Commissioner for Patents
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

By facsimile: (571) 273-8300
Attn: Office of Petitions

Telephone inquiries should be directed to the undersigned (571) 272-3222.


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Office of Petitions

⁸See *In re Mattulah*, 38 App. D.C. 497 (D.C. Cir. 1912).

⁹See *Smith v. Mossinghoff*, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 977 (Fed. Cir. 1982) (citing *Potter v. Dann*, 201 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 574 (D.D.C. 1978) for the proposition that counsel's nonawareness of PTO rules does not constitute "unavoidable" delay)). Although court decisions have only addressed the issue of lack of knowledge of an attorney, there is no reason to expect a different result due to lack of knowledge on the part of a pro se (one who prosecutes on his own) applicant. It would be inequitable for a court to determine that a client who spends his hard earned money on an attorney who happens not to know a specific rule should be held to a higher standard than a pro se applicant who makes (or is forced to make) the decision to file the application without the assistance of counsel.